

VZCZCXRO0468
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1620 1391144
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 191144Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1215
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 001620

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/18/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: DEPUTY FM ON WORKING GROUPS: PARTICIPANTS
SELECTED, JORDAN, SYRIA AND TURKEY ASKED TO HOST FIRST
MEETING

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary. In a May 14 meeting with PolCouns, Deputy Foreign Minister Labeed Abbawi updated on the status of working groups discussed at the March 10 Neighbors Conference and formalized at the May 4 Ministerial conference in Sharm el-Sheikh. The working groups will focus on border and security issues; fuel and energy imports; and Iraqi refugees. Iraq and the UN will lead the meetings while Iraq's neighbors as well as a few additional organizations will participate in the first meetings tentatively scheduled to occur between June 5th and June 15th in Jordan, Syria and Turkey. While these first meetings will be limited to neighbors only and a couple of limited exceptions, Abbawi left open the possibility that technical experts from other countries may attend future meetings. End Summary.

MFA OUTLINES PARTICIPANTS AND DATES FOR FIRST MEETINGS

[¶2.](#) (C) Abbawi said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has moved forward with the working groups by sending letters to Jordan, Syria and Turkey asking them to host the first meetings on refugees, security and energy respectively. The letters emphasized GOI preference that the meetings occur between June 5th and June 15th.

[¶3.](#) (C) The GOI and UN will lead each group Abbawi said, with representatives from Syria, Egypt, Iran, Turkey, the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), and the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) to participate in the first meeting on refugees. The fuel and energy group includes Syria, Kuwait, Iran, and Turkey, while the border and security group includes representatives from Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Egypt. According to Abbawi, Turkey contacted the MFA before they had sent these letters and volunteered to host all three working group meetings. Turkey stated, however, that they will "leave it the GOI to decide."

[¶4.](#) (C) Letters to participating countries have been drafted, Abbawi noted. In addition to encouraging active participation, they outline the GOI's proposals for where and when the meetings should occur and who will be invited to participate. Abbawi said only Iraq's neighbors will be included in the first round of meetings, with the exception of Egypt, the OIC and the UN, although he left open the possibility that future meetings will "be open to others."

DEFINING THE WAY FORWARD; DESCRIBING IRAQI PARTICIPATION

[¶5.](#) (C) Abbawi requested guidance on how the committees should function and what role they should play. "We want," he said,

"for these committees to mean something, but what will they be able to do?" PolCouns replied that the working groups should be seen as "problem-solving" entities. The GOI and each member country should approach the meetings with specific problems or concerns that the groups can then discuss and hopefully solve. She further noted that while some of the issues will have specific bilateral elements to it, the GOI should not hesitate to ask for technical expertise from other countries or groups. Abbawi reiterated that the GOI sees a role for outside expertise, but that by limiting the first meeting to neighbors, Egypt, the UN and the OIC it addressed concerns raised by Syria and Iran.

¶6. (C) When asked about Iraq's delegation, Abbawi said the MFA will lead each Iraqi delegation, and that each of the groups began meeting prior to the May 4 conference. Abbawi said he chairs the security meetings which include representatives from the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS), the National Security Agency, Border Security and the Ministries of Interior and Defense. Ambassador Hindawi leads the energy group with representatives from the Ministries of Energy and Oil, while Undersecretary for Multilateral Relations and Legal, Administrative, and Technical Affairs Dr. Mohammad Hammoud leads the refugee group with participants from the Ministries of Displacement and Migration, Human Rights and Interior.

¶7. (C) Comment: Embassy intends to follow up with each of the working group leaders to coordinate agendas and topics for each group. End Comment.
CROCKER